

# THE BEATITUDES

*A Series of Studies*

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BY

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GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK  
DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.

1929

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES AT  
THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS  
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

FIRST EDITION

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## FOREWORD

THE following chapters are the outgrowth of a series of noonday talks on the beatitudes given last summer in the tabernacle of the Southern Assembly at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. They are dedicated to the kind friends who expressed interest in them and urged that they be published.

Many Christians are puzzled by the beatitudes. They find themselves in the position of a conscientious tourist before a famous painting. He knows he ought to admire it but does not quite understand why. The characteristics which Jesus extols in the beatitudes ought, they feel, to be admirable, for Jesus says those who possess them are blessed. But they find it difficult to see why. The virtues emphasized differ from those stressed in the moral education of childhood. Their ideals do not bulk large in the current theologies. The characteristics they hold up as ideal differ from those of our current civilization. They do not seem very practicable in our world, and one may pass as a good Christian without being conspicuous by virtue of displaying them.

It has been my endeavour to show the practical

bearing of the beatitudes on some problems of our time and to point out the essential meaning of their blessedness. I can only hope that the studies may prove stimulating and lead to a better understanding of these ideals of Jesus and more practical faith in their modern value. There remains in them "yet very much land to be possessed."

It is not possible to give credit, except in case of direct quotation, to the many to whom I am indebted for fruitful ideas and suggestions. Safed the Sage remarks profoundly that "originality consists chiefly in forgetting where you read it."

ELBERT RUSSELL.

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November 18, 1928.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

THE beatitudes form the opening section of the Sermon on the Mount. They share in the history, significance, characteristics, and problems of the sermon. We begin therefore with those features of the sermon as a whole which have an important bearing on the meaning and evaluation of the beatitudes.

The Sermon on the Mount marked a crisis in Jesus' public ministry and a consequent change in the method of his teaching. After the imprisonment of John he began as an itinerant preacher, teaching in the synagogues of Galilee. The synagogue service furnished a natural and easy point of departure in his work. There he found gathered, week after week, the most religious people of the communities. The synagogue ritual gave opportunity for him to read a passage of his own choosing from the prophets and to preach without apparent breach with established customs.

The only example of his synagogue sermons that has been preserved is the one delivered while on a visit to Nazareth (Luke 4:15-30). In his home town Jesus went, according to his custom, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and volunteered to

read the lesson from the prophets and to preach. He chose a passage which emphasized the joyous, healing, helpful work of the Messiah in contrast with the common expectation of national glory or fiery judgment. Then he told them that the prediction of the prophet was being fulfilled in their very presence.

It was necessary for Jesus to give the people a new idea of the Messiah and his work before it was safe to tell them that he himself was the Messiah. His ideas were so different from the popular expectation that they did not at once catch the suggestion in his message that the Messianic age had actually come and that he himself was the Christ. Only a few demoniacs who were unusually suggestible seem to have caught and expressed the implications of his message.

Jesus was finally compelled to give up the use of the synagogue by the growth of his popularity as a healer. The healing of a leper in particular and the consequent fame precipitated the crisis. No city had a synagogue large enough to accommodate its whole population. And Jesus was not only crowded out of the synagogue by the multitudes, but he found it impossible any more even to get into a city through the crowded streets. He was therefore compelled to preach in the open, in the fields, on the hillsides, or by the seashore.

This compelled a change in his methods. He could no longer count on an orderly congregation

or an established ritual. The out-of-door audience was a restless and fickle throng, which would stay and listen only as long as he interested them. His teaching must therefore be about things in which they were interested for the moment. The topics about which he spoke were usually furnished by the occasion—some striking incident, some unconventional behaviour of Jesus or his disciples, a question from the crowd. This “occasional” teaching was naturally fragmentary and often dealt with subjects not of first importance from Jesus’ point of view. Nevertheless, he showed his skill as a teacher in being able, in spite of these disadvantages, to convey the fundamental principles of the gospel.

During the early months of Jesus’ Galilean ministry his fame spread very rapidly and his popularity grew until he was surrounded everywhere by great multitudes (Mark 1:45; 2:2). His popularity was due chiefly to his healings, but people were also attracted by his unconventional character, by his criticism of the Pharisees and the Jewish leaders, by the original methods and popular style of his teaching, and by his freedom from the yoke of legalism. His gospel was good news to those who had neither the time nor inclination to practise the law as the Pharisees did. In a short time the crowds who gathered to hear Jesus or to be healed by him came from all parts of Palestine (Mark 3:7-12).



The range of the human voice is quite restricted. The number of people who could get within hearing of Jesus was thus necessarily limited. Under favourable circumstances he might speak to ten thousand people at once or possibly fifteen thousand; but physical limitations prevented an indefinite growth in the size of the crowds who heard him and still more in the number who could reach him to be healed. Jesus now faced a new problem: whether his movement was to be confined to the number who could hear him speak and to the particular place where he was at work. Could the movement be decentralized? Could it be detached from Jesus' person? Was it possible to deputize others to carry on the work in his absence?

As at other great crises of his life, Jesus sought light and leading in prayer. He went up into a mountain apparently near Capernaum, and after a night of prayer he reached the decision that it was possible to give to his followers his message, to fire them with his enthusiasm, and to open to them the necessary sources of strength in God, so that they could carry on his work apart from himself (Luke 6: 12; Mk. 3: 14, 15).

With the dawn Jesus called his disciples to him and from them he chose twelve whom he named apostles (Luke 6: 13). We must always distinguish between the disciples of Jesus who followed him more or less continuously, the number of them varying from time to time (Luke 10: 1; John 6: 66,

67; I. Cor. 15:6; Acts 1:13-15), and the apostles who numbered only twelve and who were pretty constantly with him from this time on. The name "apostle" means "sent on a mission" and is the equivalent from the Greek of the word "missionary" from the Latin. Mark tells us that Jesus chose the twelve "that they might be with him" (in order to learn from him) and "that he might send them forth to preach and to heal." Before he sent them out on an independent mission they were to have a period of intensive training in his company.

With the choice of the twelve Jesus established a school. He continued for a time to teach publicly, but his teaching from this time forth was directed primarily toward the training of the twelve or was supplemented by special instructions to them (Mark 4:10-13). This brought another change in his method of teaching. The advantage of a school is that the teacher can present the subject in a systematic order as it lies in his own mind. He can count upon the pupil's interest in the teacher and the subject matter to sustain his attention. From this time forward Jesus was no longer dependent for the subjects or order of his teaching on the whim of the multitude or the suggestion of the occasion.

The Sermon on the Mount, which immediately followed the choosing of the twelve (Luke 6:12-49), was the beginning of Jesus' training of the apostles.



It was, as we have noted, his first effort to convey to others the gospel of the kingdom as it lay in his own mind. It is his first systematic statement of what kind of people and what kind of conduct are right according to the standards of the kingdom of God. The importance of this fact is very great. The Sermon on the Mount is not a series of counsels of perfection or of ideals for a far-off millennium. It was the groundwork of Jesus' training of those who were to be his assistants and successors in the world. He was teaching them what they were shortly to preach and immediately to put in practice. He knew that they would be persecuted when they attempted to practise it (Matt. 5: 11, 12) and he concludes the sermon with a warning that the way he has defined, though it is straitened, is nevertheless the way of life; and that everyone who hears his words and does not practise them will fail as completely as the foolish man who built his house upon the sand. The Christian Church, as a whole, has never recognized the place of the Sermon on the Mount in Jesus' life and teaching nor treated it with the seriousness that that place requires.

The account of the Sermon on the Mount in Luke 6: 20-49 differs greatly from that found in Matt. 5-7. It appears that the authors of the first and third gospels used different Greek documents as sources, but a comparison shows that they are versions of the same discourse. Both begin with beatitudes, both

close with the illustration of the two houses, one built on the sand and the other on the rock; and practically all the intervening matter in Luke is found in Matthew. Luke has evidently omitted part of Jesus' teaching which was so distinctly Jewish in form that it would not interest his Gentile readers (*e.g.*, Matt. 5:17-6:18); and Matthew has pieced out the sermon by teachings of Jesus on similar topics drawn from the so-called Perea source that Luke used in chaps. 9:51-18:14. We may safely use Matthew's account for an understanding of this type of Jesus' teaching, though all of it was not uttered at the same time.

The subject of the sermon is "The Righteousness of the Kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> The words "righteousness" and "kingdom" recur in it like a splendid motif in a great oratorio. Jesus' ideal of righteousness is presented by comparison or contrast with the two great standards of character prevalent in the world of his time: the standard of the Pharisees (see Matt. 5:20) and that of the Roman Stoics (see Matt. 5:47 and 6:32, 33).

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew uses the expression "Kingdom of Heaven," conforming to Jewish custom in substituting "Heaven" for "God" where practicable. (Compare Luke 15:7, 18, where a similar substitution is made.)

## THE BEATITUDES

## THE BEATITUDES

THE beatitudes stand at the opening of the Sermon on the Mount both in Matthew and in Luke. They differ materially in form and number in the two versions. Luke has four beatitudes followed by four corresponding woes. Matthew has relegated the woe-material of Jesus' teaching to the twenty-third chapter, where in characteristic fashion he has a collection of woes, and has filled their places in the beginning of the sermon with four additional beatitudes. Matthew in general fills out the brief reports of Jesus' discourses found in Mark by adding similar material drawn from other occasions or documents. Luke especially bears testimony that Jesus used the beatitude form on many occasions. Other beatitudes of Jesus, which are found in the gospels aside from the Sermon on the Mount, are the following:

"Blessed is he who shall find no occasion of stumbling in me." Matt. 11:6; Luke 7:23.

"Blessed are your eyes for they see; and your ears for they hear." Matt. 13:16.

"Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see." Luke 10:23.

"Blessed art thou, Simon bar-Jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Matt. 16: 17.

"Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." Matt. 24: 46 (see Luke 12: 37, 38, 43).

"Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." Luke 11: 28.

"Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." John 20: 29.

See also Matt. 23: 39; Mark 10: 16; 11: 9, 10; Luke 14: 14, 15; 23, 29.

In Matthew the beatitudes are given in the third person, while in Luke they appear in the second person. In the first case they speak of classes in general, while in the other they are addressed to Jesus' disciples and others of his immediate hearers. This difference seems to apply to other passages in the two gospels. In Matthew the words of recognition at the baptism of Jesus are given likewise in the third person: "This is my beloved son"; while in Luke (and Mark as well) the words are directly addressed to him: "Thou art my beloved son" (Matt. 3: 17; Mk. 1: 11; Lk. 3: 22). Four of the classes upon whom blessing is pronounced in Matthew's version are qualified by spiritualizing phrases; the poor *in spirit*, the hungry and thirsty *for righteousness*, the pure *in*



*heart*, the persecuted *for righteousness' sake*. The corresponding beatitudes in Luke, except the last, lack the qualifying phrases. The blessing is pronounced simply on the poor, the hungry, the mourners. We shall discuss the significance of this difference in the appropriate place.

The form and arrangement of the beatitudes in Matthew are probably due to the author of our Greek gospel, or to the collection of the sayings of Jesus, which tradition ascribes to Matthew the apostle and which the writer of our first gospel used in some way. In many places it seems to preserve the Hebrew literary form, especially the poetic parallelism, better than other documents. In the Sermon in Matthew the sayings of Jesus are arranged in the form of text and comment, with a preference for a sevenfold structure.<sup>1</sup> This arrangement prevails even in the beatitudes. The first beatitude—the poor in spirit—is the text for the sevenfold comment of the remaining beatitudes.

In the poetry of the Old Testament we find two figures of parallelism that also reappear in the beatitudes. The arrangement in quatrains of parallel lines containing parallel or corresponding ideas is very common. So the eight beatitudes of Matthew's version constitute two quatrains, each ending with the word "righteousness." The en-

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<sup>1</sup>The following sayings are the texts of the matter following: Matt. 5: 17; 6: 1; 6: 19, 20; 7: 1; 7: 16.

velope figure consists of a passage included between identical phrases, as in the Eighth Psalm, which begins and ends with the apostrophe: "O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is thy name in all the earth." A similar envelope figure is found in Matt. 7:16-20. The first and last beatitudes close with the promise: "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In this way the general theme of the sermon as a whole—"The Righteousness of the Kingdom of Heaven"—is emphasized in the very opening section. This arrangement is probably due to the author of the Logia or to the composer of the Greek gospel, but it seems highly probable that so poetic a spirit as Jesus, brought up as he was in the Hebrew tradition and accustomed from childhood to the poetry of the Psalms and other Old Testament literature, would use parallelism for his words of gnomic wisdom as well as for his utterances of exalted imagination and lofty feeling.

The idea of blessing or beatitude runs through Hebrew thought and literature, but the words used for it in Hebrew and biblical Greek are hard to render aptly and accurately into English. The Old Testament contains many blessings that have the force both of prophecy and a last will and testament, such as the blessings of the patriarchs on their descendents and the blessing of Moses on the tribes of Israel (Gen. 9:25-27; 24:60; 27:27-29, 39, 40; 48:15, 16; 49:1-27; Num. 23:1-24: 24; Deut. 33). The express form of the beatitude

is found in many passages. Many of them are hardly more than expressions of gratitude for deliverance or for services rendered the speaker or his friends or the nation. Others express the conviction that certain types of character or classes of people enjoy the favour and blessing of God. Some specify the form which the blessing shall take or in what it consists (see Deut. 28:3-6). Types of character or patterns of conduct which enjoy the divine blessing, according to the Old Testament ideals, characterize those who eschew the ways of the wicked, who are considerate of the poor, who observe God's judgments and dwell in God's house; the people who know the Lord, who wait for him or take refuge in him; the penitent, the undefiled, the just, the upright, the guileless, the wise and teachable.

The following are the principal Old Testament beatitudes—omitting those which pronounce a blessing on the name of God for his greatness and goodness, and which are parallel only in form with the beatitudes we are studying.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel  
of the wicked,  
Nor standeth in the way of winners,  
Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers.

Ps. 1:1.

Blessed are all they that take refuge in Him.

Ps. 2:12. Also Ps. 34:8.



Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven.  
Whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputeth  
not iniquity.

And in whose spirit there is no guile.

Ps. 32:1, 2.

Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah.

Ps. 33:12.

Blessed is the man that maketh Jehovah his trust,  
And respecteth not the proud nor such as turn  
aside to lies.

Ps. 40:4. Also Ps. 84:12.

Blessed is he that considereth the poor.

Ps. 41:1.

Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest  
to approach unto thee,  
That he may dwell in thy courts.

Ps. 65:4.

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house,  
They will be still praising thee.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee;  
In whose heart are the highways to Zion.

Ps. 84:4, 5.

Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound:  
They walk, O Jehovah, in the light of thy coun-  
tenance.

Ps. 89:15.

Blessed is the man whom thou chasteneth, O  
Jehovah,  
And teachest out of thy law.

Ps. 94:12.

Blessed are they that keep justice  
And he that doeth righteousness at all times.

Ps. 106:3.

Blessed is the man that feareth Jehovah,  
That delighteth greatly in his commandments,  
Ps. 112:1. Also Ps. 128:1.

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.  
Ps. 118:26.

Blessed are they that are perfect in the way,  
Who walk in the law of Jehovah.  
Blessed are they that keep his testimonies,  
That seek him with the whole heart.

Ps. 119:1, 2.

Blessed are they that keep my ways.  
Prov. 8:32.

Blessed is the man that heareth me.  
Prov. 8:34.

Blessed are all they that wait for him.  
Isa. 30:18.

Blessed is the man that trusteth in Jehovah,  
And whose trust Jehovah is.  
Jer. 17:7.

Other passages which are not so closely parallel to the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount are Gen. 14:19; Num. 24:9; Deut. 28:3-6; Judg. 5:24; 17:2; Ruth 2:19, 20; 3:10; I Sam. 15:13; 23:21; 25:32; II Sam. 2:5; Isa. 19:25; 32:20; 56:2; [Dan. 12:12.

In some modern versions the word commonly rendered by "blessed" is translated "happy." But the word "happy" originally meant those to whom things happen well. Behind it lies the shadow of the Greek idea of a blind fate which ultimately determines men's destinies. A similar idea is inherent in the word "fortunate," from the Latin. The Hebrew word has an essentially spiritual quality and is much deeper and richer in its connotation. Back of it lies the idea of a Providence which determines the course of life for men—a moral providence, whose blessing is given, not arbitrarily or blindly, but as a natural recompense for right conduct in a world built and administered on moral foundations. Blessing and righteousness and divine providence are inseparable in the Hebrew conception. In one sense the word "successful" might be used to translate the word. The successful life is the one which enjoys the blessing of God. But the word "successful" carries with it, especially in America, an idea of material success, or at least, of outward success. The Hebrew idea, especially as Jesus uses it, is far more inward and ethical. The meek and persecuted are

called blessed by Jesus, while we Americans would hardly call them successful.

The promises which are attached to the individual beatitudes are for the most part echoes of Old Testament passages and ideas. The term "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of heaven" was not original with Jesus. He inherited it from the Old Testament and from current Jewish hopes. The blessing which he specifies for each type of right character is a promise of some form of the felicity of those to whom the kingdom of God belongs. The first and last give the promise in the general form: "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The other blessings promised are likewise specific results of membership in the kingdom. They, too, are adapted from the Old Testament, the choice being determined by Jesus' custom of spiritualizing and moralizing the concept of the kingdom. The following paraphrase indicates the echoes, reminiscences, and quotations from the Old Testament which the promises contain.

Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
For the saints of the Most High shall receive  
the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever,  
even forever and ever.

Dan. 7:18; cf. Matt. 19:14.

Blessed are they that mourn,  
For the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears  
from off all faces and comfort all that mourn.

Isa. 25:8; 61:2; cf. Rev. 7:17.

Blessed are the meek,  
For they shall inherit the Promised Land.  
Josh. 13:1; Ps. 37:11; cf. Heb. 4:6-9.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after  
righteousness,  
For Jehovah shall make them lie down in  
green pastures and lead them beside waters  
of rest.

Ps. 23:2; cf. John 4:13, 14, 6:35.

Blessed are they that show mercy,  
For God will show himself merciful to them.  
Ps. 62:12; Ps. 18:25; cf. Matt. 18:21-35.

Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they shall dwell in God's court and be-  
hold his face.  
Ps. 11:7; 17:15; 24:3, 4; cf. Matt. 18:10.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called Sons of God.  
Isa. 32:17; 45:7; cf. II Cor. 6:16-18.

Blessed are they that are persecuted for right-  
eousness' sake,  
For the kingdom shall be given to the suffering  
saints of the Most High.  
Dan. 7:25-27; cf. Acts 14:22.

In a charming chapter on "The Sermon on the Mount" Joseph Wittig has this comment on the blessedness of the beatitudes:



“When I saw the word ‘blessed,’ I thought to myself: ‘Then I am Christian only when I am blessed. Otherwise I am heathenish or Jewish; apparently Jewish, since I believe in one God and not in many gods, as the heathen do.’ That makes me always despair, because I see so many Christians and so few Blessed. For Jesus came to make men blessed: did he not succeed?

“‘Yes, indeed’, comes the answer, ‘he does succeed. The blessed are in heaven. The blessedness comes only in heaven.’

“No, heaven comes in the blessedness. ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ The Saviour is not speaking of a future but of a present state. The finest confession of faith is the reflection of the heart in the face. I wish to be blessed in my Christianity not just blessed. The conceptions ‘Christian’ and ‘blessed’ must be so conceived that one can be put in place of the other. If you call yourself a Christian and are not yet blessed, then I do not believe in your Christianity, for I do believe in the blessedness.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*Jesu Leben in Palästina, Schlesien, und anderswo*, by Joseph Wittig.

THE POOR IN SPIRIT

## THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

AT FIRST sight there is a fundamental difference between the form of this beatitude in Matthew and in Luke. Luke has simply "Blessed are ye poor," and this is often understood to mean those who are poor in this world's goods. The gospel of Luke shows a special sympathy with the lower classes, the poor, the exploited, the disinherited, and the oppressed. It is often called the Ebionite gospel. It is in keeping with this interest that he seems to report Jesus as speaking only of those who are poor in this world's goods. However, this tendency in Luke is easily overemphasized and a careful study of the usage of Jewish literature seems to show that even Luke did not understand Jesus to promise the kingdom of God to any class of people simply on account of outward conditions. Contemporary religious literature frequently designates a spiritual class by the term "the poor." This usage justifies Matthew's qualification "poor in spirit," although Luke probably gives Jesus' words more exactly.



In the later Psalms and in other Jewish writings of the time of Jesus we find frequent mention of a class who are called "the poor," "the needy," "the meek," "the righteous" in contrast with a class which is called "the rich," "the mighty," "the proud," and "the wicked." The class so designated seems to have been made up of devout, unpretentious people, who did not have time to attend to all the Pharisaic rites and ceremonies. They were despised by the Pharisees and oppressed by the strong. They waited patiently and trustfully for the "consolation of Israel," and meantime were kindly, honest folk, whose industry supplied the means of life to the nation, and whose kindness made them good and helpful neighbours. They are pretty much the kind of people that Jesus called the "poor in spirit," "the meek," and "the salt of the earth," promising them that they should inherit the earth and possess the kingdom of heaven.

The group of people who appear in the entourage of Jesus in the stories of his childhood in Matthew and Luke, his "kinsfolk and acquaintance," are people of this kind. Such are Joseph and Mary, Zachariah and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna, and the shepherds of Bethlehem. Their kindly and devout character must have impressed upon Jesus an ideal of social character quite in contrast with the pride and empty formalities of priest and Pharisee.

The poor in spirit to whom Jesus promises the

kingdom of God are thus a spiritual class, distinct from the religious leaders who devoted themselves to the study of the law, to religious exercises with an emphasis on outward things, and to what Mr. Brierley calls "public meeting religion," and also from the ruling classes who filled the places of influence, power, and honour. They were the "salt of the earth," good industrious neighbours who had neither the time nor the means to devote themselves to the outward forms of religion or social life, but whose neighbourliness and patient industry kept society together and made it possible for the world to get on. Now and then among other classes there might be found individuals with the same spirit: the father of John the Baptist was a priest. But Jesus knew that it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God and difficult for the mighty to humble themselves sufficiently to gain admittance. The poor in spirit are the simple, common people who are teachable, hopeful, patient, reliable, loyal, and unselfish.

As has been already indicated, "poor in spirit" is the comprehensive designation which includes the classes cited in the following beatitudes. The first beatitude is the text on which the other seven constitute the comment. As one studies the characteristics that go to make up Jesus' ideal citizen of the kingdom of God, the contrast stands out between his ideal and the two which must have been uppermost in the minds of his hearers: the

Roman and the Pharisee. The Pharisee was the national saint, the popular ideal of the Jews. The Roman was the successful man, the master and ruler of the world. Jesus' hearers must have expected him to acknowledge the blessedness of one or the other or both. Instead we find him presenting an ideal in sharp contrast to both.

Again and again in the gospel Jesus gives us portraits of the typical Pharisee. We are not to assume that all Pharisees were as self-righteous, proud, hypocritical, and self-satisfied as those whom Jesus pictures for us, but Pharisaism undoubtedly had the tendencies which Jesus holds up to reprobation and when it produced its perfect work the result was a character quite opposite to that pronounced fit for the kingdom of God. "For except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God (Matt. 5:20). In the parable of the Pharisee and publican (Luke 18:9-14) Jesus draws the contrast between the Pharisee who is consciously rich in spirit and the publican who knows his spiritual poverty. The Pharisee goes up to the temple to pray but he does not feel any spiritual need. He goes simply to thank God that he is as good as a man need be. "God, I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get." God could give him

no blessing because he felt no need; but the poor publican, who dared not put himself in the company of the righteous Pharisee, nor even to lift up his eyes unto heaven, smote his breast saying, "God, be thou merciful to me a sinner." Jesus adds that this man who felt his spiritual poverty received a blessing rather than the other.

"From the commentaries which deal with this beatitude, one sees that it is disagreeable to many Christians. No one wants to be poor in spirit. They speak of a poverty spiritually conceived—with which considerable riches may be comfortably combined—or of real outward poverty, borne in the right spirit. The most ingenious explanations are found for the poor in spirit. But these explanations themselves merely show that there exists too little poverty of spirit!

"To be really poor in spirit, one must be so poor that all learning, all spiritual possessions mean no more to him than the dust on his cracked shoes means to a beggar; he must put off everything from his spirit as one strips off his clothes before taking a bath. Then the kingdom of heaven can come. The scribes and Pharisees could not attain to the kingdom because they could not rid themselves of their school-learning and the scholastic point of view. I do not like to use the word 'spiritual lack of culture.' But culture is not accumulation; often it is rather abandonment. Many a living room becomes cultured only when three fourths of all its collected, installed, and hung-up evidences of culture are thrown out. If a really cultured tenant comes, he asks for a room entirely empty, so



that he can furnish it to his own taste. Such a tenant is the Kingdom of Heaven!"<sup>1</sup>

A glance through the list of the beatitudes makes evident that the virtues enumerated are quite the opposite of those attributed to the Pharisees. The Pharisee was not a mourner either for his own or for others' sins, for he was self-satisfied. He was not hungering and thirsting after righteousness, for he was self-righteous. He was not pure in heart, for he made a religion of externals. The Pharisees, Jesus said, "cleansed the outside of the cup and the platter, but inwardly were full of extortion and excess." They were like "whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (Matt. 23:25-28). The Pharisees were not persecuted for righteousness' sake, for their righteousness brought them great popularity. They loved to stand and pray in the synagogues and the corners of the streets that their righteousness might be seen of men (Matt. 6:5).

Jesus' ideal is equally at variance with that of the Roman. The Roman was not poor in spirit but rather lordly, masterful, self-seeking. "Ye know that they who are accounted to rule over the Gentiles," Jesus said, "lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them" (Mark 10:42). The Roman was not meek; he was aggressive and

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<sup>1</sup>*Jesu Leben in Palästina, Schlesien, und anderswo*, Wittig.

domineering. Nor was the Roman merciful. The rulers of the empire, like modern militarists, were afraid that the people would become soft and lose the fighting morale if they grew merciful. Mercy was regarded as unworthy of strong men; it was womanish and weak. The Roman was a warrior and conqueror, not a peacemaker; except, as one of the ancients ironically said, when they "made a desolation and called it peace."

There is a third class not mentioned in the gospels but present everywhere, which Jesus does not bless in the beatitudes. He blessed the poor in spirit but not spiritual paupers. Poverty is a relative term. People are poor in proportion as they fall short of their material desires. Many Americans feel very poor when they possess material comforts and luxuries which would seem like fabulous riches to the masses of India or China. Poverty is therefore a spiritual state. It depends on people's consciousness of what they lack or on their lack of contentment with their possessions. The poor in spirit are likewise those who recognize their spiritual shortcomings, who desire to be better, who have not yet given up the struggle after greater righteousness. But Jesus did not bless the spiritual paupers. A pauper is one who has given up the struggle for economic independence or competence; one who has lost the spirit of independence and is willing to accept destitution or live by charity. Jesus had no blessing for the

spiritually dead or indifferent, for the hopeless and the despairing. The old darky preacher wished to add another beatitude: "Blessed is dem dat 'spects nuffin, fo' dey shall not be dis'pointed." But Jesus gave no such beatitude. The kingdom of heaven does not belong to those in whom conscience, spiritual hunger, and aspiration are dead.

We can easily understand why Jesus laid so great stress on humility as a fundamental condition for entering the kingdom of God or why he said that we must receive the kingdom as a little child. The gifts of life are for those who have the eagerness, the humility, the teachableness, the receptivity of the child. Enlarging knowledge and capacity, joy and love are open to those who face life with the eager curiosity and growing energy of the child. The opportunities of life close one after another to us as we become content with our achievements, lose the primitive curiosity as to the unknown, and grow disinclined to spiritual adventure. When we settle in the ruts of custom, grow content with our character and attainments, and lose the sense of spiritual need, the gates of the kingdom of heaven do not open so readily into the realms of the greater life.

"A real artist does not like to play the barrel-organ, which has only six or seven melodies on its cylinder. He takes the cylinder out and supplies keys, so that he can get out of the pipes whatever melodies his artist spirit inspires. The great organ

stands in the lofty cathedral silent; the mountain forest not more silent. It has notes for all tunes, but there is no tune fixed in its structure. Therefore, the artist can come and play on it. But if there were a tune already in the organ, the artist's playing would be spoiled. 'I have six tunes on my cylinder,' the barrel-organ might say to the pipe-organ, 'and you have none.' And then it would go through the village and play a hymn, three popular songs, a polka and a waltz. But the pipe-organ can only stay in the church, silent and poor, till evensong, then the wind roars through its pipes in the grand Benediction: *Tantum ergo sacramentum.*'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*Leben Jesu in Palästina, Schlesien, und anderswo*, Wittig.



## THE MOURNERS

## THE MOURNERS

Blessed are they that mourn,  
For they shall be comforted.

IN THE best manuscripts of the New Testament this beatitude comes second, although some put it after the blessing on the meek.

This is one of the most original and astonishing sayings of Jesus. It brings us at once face to face with the sphinx mystery of pain and evil. Even though we understand that it is the mourners in spirit, as the context requires, who are blessed, it still sets Jesus apart from the other great religious teachers of the world. With one accord they affirm that *they who do not* suffer or mourn are the blest. Buddha offers a Nirvana that is painless (spiritually at least). The Stoic seeks to callous his soul against the impact of misfortune. If the arrows of outrageous fortune penetrate his armour of proud indifference and wound unbearably, then through suicide "the way out lies open." Hinduism offers release from all painful illusions of life through the extinction of personal consciousness and reabsorption in Brahm. Mrs. Eddy offers escape from the ills of life by denying and ignor-

ing the reality of evil and thus destroying its hold in human consciousness. These all shrink back from the fulness of life in order to escape its pain. They know no panacea for suffering that does not involve arresting, dwarfing, perverting, or abandoning life itself.

Jesus, on the contrary, seeks the solution of the problem of suffering in the opposite direction. He came to offer life, abundant life, eternal life. He would swallow up pain in victory, mortality in life, and transmute sorrow and sighing into the joys of creation, achievement, beauty, fellowship, and love.

If we ask a biologist to rank living creatures according to their position in the scale of life, we discover that he actually ranks them according to their capacity for pain. At the bottom are the crystal and the clod. At the zero of the scale they lie, having no life—nor pain. Higher is the worm, which has few of the capacities of life—and few of its pains. Higher still is the turtle. Its hard, insensitive shell guards it from much suffering, but it is cold-blooded and sluggish. The horse is a splendid animal, finely organized, sensitive, high spirited. But his sensitive nerves, intense desires, and acute fears make him the mourner among beasts. He lives much and suffers much. Above the horse, man rejoices in the richness of mental and spiritual life, and man also is a mourner *par excellence*. He has feelings to get hurt, a conscience

to gnaw at him, problems to baffle him, and he suffers from unsatisfied aspirations. Every step upward in the scale of life means increasing susceptibility to pain. Possibly God might have created beings with high potentialities of life without a corresponding liability to suffer, but he did not do so.

To certain people the discipline of Christian Science has undoubtedly brought an increase of inward peace and personal well-being, physical as well as mental. They are chiefly of the well-to-do classes, whose ills are largely of their own making or spring from conditions which they can change or avoid. But the philosophy of Christian Science, if I understand it, especially its assertion that evil exists only in the limitations and disorders of human thinking, seems incredibly absurd, in the light of the life history of our planet. In the museum of the University of Frankfurt-am-Main is the skeleton of a dinosaur. It is about seventy feet long. Its jaws measure twenty feet and they are armed with great teeth like the spikes of an old-fashioned harrow. In life the beast must have weighed twenty tons, and in order for it to live, sentient beings must have writhed in their death pangs between those awful jaws every day. And this, we are told, was millions of years before man appeared on the earth—before there was any human mind, either to be conscious of or to be the cause of suffering. No, suffering is as

old as life, its dread companion, its shadow and handmaid alike. [Jesus knew that the possibilities of life are commensurate with the capacity for pain. So he blessed the soul that can mourn because it can also enter into the higher reaches of spiritual life.] There is no benediction for souls drugged, beaten, or hypnotized into stupidity or unconsciousness—for souls asleep, or for the spiritually dead.

Every increase in capacity to enjoy the higher life carries with it increased capacity to suffer. If we develop our musical appreciation so that we can enjoy the works of the great masters, it means that our neighbour's discords have so much the greater power to torture our ears. The heightened appreciation of beauty means greater sensitiveness to ugliness. As we learn the beauty of holiness and rejoice in the fellowship of saints, we give the vulgarity, obscenity, and sin of men more power to give us pain. In this lies part of the reason why Jesus was preëminently the "man of sorrows." "He felt," as George Adam Smith aptly phrases it, "all the sin of man with all the conscience of God."

But the joys of life are the compensation for all life's ills. Who that has known the exquisite thrill of the symphony concert would give up the capacity for it just to escape the neighbour's discords? Nor would we allow our eyes to be blinded to the harmonies of the sunset or the autumn



woods to avoid their recoil from the ugliness of the slum or the clash of colours in a parvenu's dress. Nor give up the heaven of the hour of worship to escape the brutal stab of the lustful glance or the profane oath! The ancient Greeks had at times an acute understanding of the problems of life and a happy gift in expressing them. One of their stories tells of a woman who came to the shore of the Styx to be ferried by Charon across into the realm of the shades. The kindly ferryman told her it was her privilege to drink of the waters of Lethe and forget the life she was leaving. She was eager for the draught of oblivion. "I will forget how I have suffered," she said. "And also," reminded the kindly Charon, "you will forget how you have rejoiced." "I will forget," she said, "my failures." "And also your victories." "I will forget how I have been hated," she continued. "And also how you have been loved." Then she paused and considered; and at last entered the boat with the draught of Lethe untasted, preferring the memories of life's cheering cup, even with the bitter tang of suffering.

Professor Royce remarks that all virtue has evil in it as a conquered element. It is likewise true that all true happiness has pain in it as a smothered ingredient. No football player is proud of an effortless victory. But the secret of life is in the face of a victorious team carried in after a hard-fought game—exhausted, bruised, and broken, but beam-

ing and envied by the men not fortunate enough to suffer with them in order to triumph with them. Above all, love has an alchemy to soften the sting of pain, to transmute suffering into joy. Love enlarges the circle of life and the exposure of its periphery to pain. Sympathy means suffering with others. One of my happiest sights was a grandmother at the head of the Thanksgiving Day table with fifty children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren present. Her face was seamed with hardship, care, and sorrow. Her hands were horny with toil, for she had worked in clearing and field as a pioneer's daughter. Ten times she had known the pains of birth, and she had watched her parents and husband and child pass from her through the gates of death. She had shared the anxieties of growing children to the third generation. She carried the burdens of the fifty on her heart. Yet no one who saw the joy shining through peace on her face thought of pitying her. Rather some of the observers admired the fulness of her life at an age when other lives are often empty; and many who had loved and suffered but little envied her then.

To Jesus the solution of the problem of evil is not in shrinking back from life or abandoning it in order to escape its pain, but in pressing forward toward the larger life in which they that mourn are comforted by the fulness of achievement, victory, and love.

## THE MEEK

## THE MEEK

Blessed are the meek,  
For they shall inherit the earth.

THIS saying is hard for us to understand. It is not merely that a great novelist has "played the dickens" with the word through Uriah Heeps's contemptible caricature of meekness. We Americans have an inheritance that makes for contempt of the meek. We incline to spell the word "weak." On one hand we have inherited through the classics the Roman militarist's and imperialist's ideal of greatness in which meekness has no place, and on the other hand we are heirs of Anglo-Saxon self-assertion and insistence on personal rights and privileges. In addition we are the descendants of aggressive, acquisitive American pioneers. Under these influences we have come to admire power, domination, and personal success. The social climber and the go-getter lie nearer our ideal of greatness than the meek and humble. There is a kind of meekness, to be sure, that arises from weakness of character or lack of self-respect. This is very far from the Christian ideal of meekness but is often confused with it. It is hard for those

bred in the traditions of Western civilization to imagine a king coming to his throne "meek and riding upon an ass." In our thought he comes upon a war horse followed by a victorious army trampling upon all who would stand in his way; for among the Gentiles "their great ones exercise authority over them."

Moffatt translates this beatitude "blessed are the humble," but the conception is larger and richer than the common meaning of the word "humble." Humility, as we have already noted in dealing with the poor in spirit, is an essential element in Jesus' ideal of character; but in order to understand the meaning of this beatitude we must go back to an Old Testament conception. The beatitude is almost a literal quotation from Psalm 37:11, "But the meek shall inherit the land and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." The preceding verse shows that the contrast is between the wicked and the meek. The word is used in the Old Testament to designate not so much a trait of character as the working attitude of a class. The meek are the common people who stand between the lawless on the one hand and the oppressors on the other. They are the people who correspond in a measure to the Confucian ideal of one who stands in his place and does his duty in society. They are the people who by their loyalty, faithfulness, and law-abiding life preserve the order of society and perform the



necessary work on which life and civilization depend. They are the people who, whatever their personal ambitions and desires and discontents, nevertheless subordinate themselves to the necessities of orderly living, of social coöperation and duty.

The Greek word which is used in the gospel text to translate the Old Testament idea is the word which Xenophon uses for domesticated animals—"horses broken to the bridle." The underlying contrast is between the wild "unbroken" animals and those which have learned to work with and for man; in the Old Testament, the wild ass and the wild ox in contrast with the domesticated animals (see Job 39:5-12; Genesis 16:12). Ishmael is compared to a wild ass among men, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him. Of such men no social organization or civilization can be made, and these highly individualistic characters usually fail through lack of coöperation. Even the strongest individual must go down sooner or later before natural or human enemies. The man against whom every man's hand is turned usually fails in the struggle of life. The ideal of meekness which Jesus sets forth is our familiar ideal of teamwork as against individualistic effort. The player who insists on starring for himself in the game is a menace rather than a source of strength to the team. It is the "meek" player, the one who subordinates his efforts to the

work of the team as a whole, who makes for a winning team. Meekness is thus the trait of those who voluntarily submit to discipline and work in coöperation with their fellow men for the great ends of the general welfare.

To this ideal of Jesus" we may apply two tests which loom large in our modern thinking. The first is the test of survival. Jesus suggests this in the promise that the meek shall inherit the earth. This must have made his hearers gasp with astonishment in a world which the Romans had conquered and which they dominated and exploited. Yet Jesus insisted that "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." The Roman Empire has gone. The disciples of Jesus, though not always preserving his ideal of meekness, are taking possession of the earth.

To go back to the suggestion of the Greek word, the domestic animals have survived while those that have refused to work together with man are becoming extinct. By the side of the wolf and the tiger and the wild ox, the dog and cat and domestic cow are meek, but it is they that are surviving in the land. President Jordan, in his book *The Human Harvest*, has shown how the dominant, conquering, imperialistic races have bled to death on the battlefield or rotted out in the vicious idleness of court and camp. The Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, and Manchus took the sword and perished with the sword. The Chinese peasant

who stood in his place and did his duty bowed to the might of the Manchu and to-day possesses the land. Successive waves of conquerors have swept into the Valley of the Nile only to die out or to be absorbed in the succession of the centuries. Pharaohs and Mamelukes alike have passed away. But in the cotton fields of Egypt to-day one may see in the peasant's face the features of some mummied Pharaoh of four millenniums ago. The meek still possess the land.

The second is the test of adaptation to the needs of our civilization. The great achievements of modern civilization are not due to greater physical strength or mental ability on the part of Europeans and Americans. Man for man the American Indians were the equal in physical strength and endurance of the European colonists who settled this country; and the ancient Greeks were probably on the average stronger intellectually than modern Europeans. But we are able to do and to enjoy so much more than any other peoples because we have learned to use the forces of nature and have developed effective systems of coöperation. Most of the great inventions and the vast increase of scientific knowledge in modern times have come through organized research and systems of education by which we pool our knowledge, so that each may profit by the experience of all. We are able to enjoy in one land the food, raw materials, and industrial products of every

land through the world-wide coöperation of modern commerce and industry. The great machines which do the work and minister to the needs of modern life are the product of this type of coöperation. A single pioneer family could have tallow candles, but only a highly organized industrial society can produce an electric light. Primitive communities can have ox-carts. One man with an ax and saw and a few other tools can fell a tree, saw off rounds for wheels, and fashion axle, tongue, and yoke; but it takes the steady coöperation of a million men to make possible a Ford automobile. In pioneer days my grandmother had a notch on the door of the log cabin; when the shadow reached that notch she knew it was noon and blew the horn that called her husband to dinner from the field. It takes but one person to make a sundial. I have a professional friend who carries an Ingersoll watch as a reminder, he says, of the fact that human coöperation has reached the point where one may know the approximate time for a dollar.

It is possible to have an efficient organization made up of very imperfect members. One recalls the story of the two beggars who wanted to travel to a distant city. Singly they were not able to make the journey, for one was blind and the other lame. But the blind man had good stout legs and a strong back and the lame man had good eyes. So the blind man took the lame one on his back and together they travelled successfully. Some of



our most efficient business corporations are made up of men sadly deficient in many essential capacities. There is a railroad which boasts that it is the standard railroad of the world. It has attained its efficiency by using each man to do the thing which he is capable of doing well, regardless of the fact that he is incapable of doing many, or even most, of the things which are necessary in railroading. A man who is colour-blind, and so disqualified from being an engineer, may serve as train dispatcher. The man who has lost a leg and could not serve as a section hand makes a good crossing flagman. The switch tender is too ignorant of mechanics to be an engineer. The office stenographer is too weak for duty on the wrecking crew. The bookkeeper would not be of any use in the repair shops. Yet, when each is meek enough to renounce the things he cannot do well and to do faithfully the thing he can do, the result is good railroading.

But coöperation and the attendant blessings of civilization are only possible to those who have the spirit of coöperation. It is only the meek, in Jesus' sense of the term, who can thus possess the world and the blessings thereof.

The Christian grace of brotherhood is the spiritual prerequisite of our modern civilization. It motivates an effectual meekness. Trowbridge tells a quaint story of the poet Whittier when he was a boy. He thought he had discovered a means of



overcoming the force of gravity. He said to his brother, "Now thee lift me and I'll lift thee, and we'll go up together." It did not work against the physical force, but this kind of teamwork in mutual helpfulness and coöperation will avail in the moral realm as the spiritual basis of human progress.

The phrase that is rendered "inherit the earth" is properly, as the revised version of Psalm 37:11 shows, to be rendered "inherit the land." It probably means to possess the Promised Land. When the Hebrews conquered the land of Canaan, they did not get possession of the whole of the promised land. The lowland Canaanites and Philistines had chariots of iron against which the Hebrews could not stand in the plain, so they were forced into the mountains and the Gentiles held the plains. The ideal border of the Promised Land was from the great river, the river Euphrates, to the brook of Egypt, but the Israelites were actually to hold only what the soles of their feet should tread upon (Josh. 1:3, 4). The generations went by and still the seed of Israel failed to take possession of the promised borders and then, because of their unfaithfulness and their vices, because they would not measure up to the ideals of their prophets, they were conquered by the heathen and dispersed among the Gentiles. But still the prophets cherished the vision of a time when the people of God would actually inherit the land with all its spiritual promise and blessings. In Jesus' day the realiza-

tion still waited on the larger coöperation of a world-wide neighbourliness and universal brotherhood. The promise still waits for fulfilment until there shall come a race filled with the spirit of meekness, of coöperation, of brotherhood. When such shall come to organize human society, then at last the meek shall inherit the promised land of Christian ideals and happiness.

## THE MERCIFUL

## THE MERCIFUL

Blessed are the merciful,  
For they shall obtain mercy.

MERCY occupies a large place in Jesus' teaching and life—not only the forgiving mercy of God which he taught, but even more man's mercy to man which he practised. "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" sums up for him the essential teaching of the prophets. His constant insistence on the supreme duty of brotherly and neighbourly love includes the practice of mercy to the hungry and the needy. In the parable of the Good Samaritan the meaning of neighbourliness in the law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is made clear in an instance of mercy that overleaps all class barriers. Jesus was moved by compassion for the leaderless people—"like sheep without a shepherd"—to teach them; and by compassion for the sick and infirm to perform his cures.

In pronouncing the virtue of mercy as blessed, Jesus was flying in the face of Roman ideals and teaching. The Stoic ideal steeled the soul against suffering. Its ideal of courage became in practice a brutal one. The militaristic peoples usually re-

gard mercy as womanish and weak. An army must be ruthless in order to be effective. The makers of moral ideals among the fighting peoples—Anglo-Saxon as well as Roman—are always afraid of the spirit of mercy, lest it destroy the fighting morale and efficiency. Mercy turns men into “softies” and “mollycoddles,” and exposes them to the danger of pitying and sparing their foes.

In order to harden the populace against this danger, the Roman leaders accustomed them to sports that dulled their natural shrinking from the sight or infliction of suffering. In the gladiatorial games they grew inured to the spectacle of men butchering one another. And when the fallen gladiator stretched out his arms toward the crowded benches, pleading for his life, he usually saw the downturned thumbs, which meant “no mercy.” We hear it repeated constantly that man is by nature unchangeably brutal, that he is and always must be a fighting animal. The truth is that it takes months of rigorous military training or habitual cruelty in the sports and customs of life to deaden effectively in man that quality of mercy which the compassionate Creator has made a divine and constant part of man’s nature.

The principle of mercy is based on the reciprocal law of life, which Jesus reiterates and illustrates so often. The Golden Rule derives its realism from it. We are to treat others as we wish them to treat us, because as life goes we get the treatment we



give. It holds in our relations with God as well as with men. If we forgive men their trespasses, God will forgive ours. With what judgment we judge, we shall be judged. Give and it shall be given to you. The merciful obtain mercy. It is true of general experience that persecution never engenders tolerance; nor tyranny liberty; nor force righteousness; nor injustice justice; nor cruelty mercy. The Romans showed no mercy in the days of their strength to their weaker neighbours; the northern barbarians showed none to Rome when they got Italy in their power. The German government was ruthless toward its foes in the day of its strength and would not talk of mercy toward Belgium, Russia, or France, while it hoped for victory. And after its defeat it got no mercy from the victors at Versailles. The Russian autocracy showed no mercy toward the liberals and peasants in the days of their power; and they got no mercy from the Bolsheviki in the day of their fall. Recently an educated young Negro was telling about an accident in which a companion was seriously hurt. He took the wounded man in his car and rushed him to the nearest hospital, where he was refused treatment, because he was coloured. The nearest hospital that would take Negro cases was twenty miles away, and before he could reach it his friend had lost so much blood that he died. As the young man told the story, the flash of his eye and the hardening of his voice made evident

that the next white man whom he found in need might expect no pity from him.]

The greatest danger of cruelty in our modern life comes not from natural or deliberate personal cruelty on our part. Man to man, we are a kind-hearted race. Our greatest cruelties are those practised at long range or because we are blinded to the results of our acts by custom or prejudice, as in the case of the Negro or foreigner. Our corporate cruelty is greater than our individual unkindness. We hide behind the crowd and do not feel individually responsible for its acts. It is all too easy in the modern world to run with the multitude to do evil. When the Pharisees did not want Jesus to relieve suffering on the Sabbath day, their hardness of heart moved him to wonder and indignation. They were merely trying to preserve the traditional sanctity of a religious institution and did not notice the prolongation of suffering to which they sentenced their fellow men. Dick Sheppard, in *The Impatience of a Parson*, insists that the church in order to be Christian must not itself do anything which it forbids to the individual member.

"I do not believe that a church can be Christian, Christlike, if it be corporately expressing or upholding judgments, values, and traditions—however hallowed by custom—that in doing violence to the spirit of love, unity, and peace are alien to the mind of Christ; or which the conscience of an

individual, who was endeavouring to live his life so that Jesus Christ could approve it, would repudiate for himself as being less than Christian. In a sentence, *a church may not be corporately less Christian than the Christian individual.*"

The state of ten excuses wholesale acts of barbarity and cruelty under plea of the general welfare or of military necessity. The Church may not bless such things nor can the Christian sanction them or participate in them, if he is to experience the divine mercy and through it share the blessings of the kingdom of God; for it is the merciful who obtain mercy. Judge Lindsey says that he had to deal with many men, in his work in the Juvenile Court in Denver, who were pillars of the church and individually kind and benevolent men. If he went to them with a case of a needy child or a delinquent boy or girl needing financial help to get a right start in life, these men would coöperate generously. But when he wanted to reform conditions which were making delinquent boys and girls, if the proposed reforms touched political privileges or financial sources of income, they would be adamant against him.

This brings us to an even greater cruelty of which we are most likely to be guilty in our modern civilization. The consequences of our acts in the complex organization of modern life are so far-reaching that we are likely to remain in ignorance of them. There are men, who would not al-

low a horse to be beaten in the streets, who will sanction political or business policies that involve enormous suffering. Some years ago the directors of the water company in a small university city in the United States refused to put in a filter because the expenditure would reduce dividends. An epidemic of typhoid fever broke out in the city as a consequence and more than a hundred students died of it. Those men would not have deliberately sentenced boys to a half year of invalidism or killed a hundred of them for the sake of an extra per cent. on the annual dividend. They simply did not face their victims nor foresee the suffering their policy entailed.

Just after the World War, when the American Friends Service Committee was assisting in the feeding of a couple of million undernourished German children, a woman of culture and wealth was appealed to for a contribution to the relief fund. She replied that she doubted the wisdom of saving them and thus bringing up another brood of vipers! Yet she was a humane woman; she probably contributed to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and possibly even to dog and cat hospitals. If one of those blue-eyed, flaxen-haired little German babies had been laid at her door, where she could see it and deal with it personally, she would have denied herself food rather than see it starve. Our modern machinery has enabled us to act beyond our sight and knowl-



edge of consequences, while our imagination and sense of personal responsibility for our corporate acts has not kept pace with the increased range of our powers. An American corporation votes to save money by refusing to put safety devices on its machinery in China. It does not mean to kill a Chinese child, but the little worker at the spindles in the textile mill falls asleep under the unprotected pulley and as she turns and stretches herself in waking is drawn into the machinery and killed. Men vote against the Child Labour Amendment and against child labour laws in their own states. They do not intend to condemn the child workers to lifelong ignorance and stunted bodies. A man owns a house in a distant city. He limits the agent rigorously as to the amount that may be spent on it to keep it in order. The father of the last family to occupy it dies of tuberculosis. It would cost ten dollars to get it fumigated. That is more than the owner can allow and still make it a paying proposition. So the agent allows another family to take it in ignorance of the state of affairs. Their baby contracts tuberculosis and dies.

There die annually in the United States about one hundred thousand babies under a year old, of socially preventable diseases. They are victims of ignorance and poverty, most of which could be removed by social reforms that are not very radical. For example, measles is not usually a very



serious disease. It is practically never fatal among the well-to-do, who can afford doctors and medicines and who call for them promptly. But in the homes of the very poor often as high as ten per cent. of the cases prove fatal. Yet the simple programmes that would save the lives of these hundred thousand babies are bitterly opposed by otherwise humane men and women; they are afraid of socialism or of increased taxes or of a bureaucracy!

Of course, they are ignorant of the cruelty they are guilty of. But so are those who, Jesus says, are to miss the kingdom in his parable of the last judgment. "When," they ask in surprise, "saw we thee hungry or sick or naked and did not minister to thee?" The answer is to point out the least of these, who are the victims of our ignorant or unintentional, but none the less responsible, corporate actions or of the machinery which we control. If we consent to live in a highly organized and democratic world like ours has become and enjoy its benefits, we must accept, before God, the responsibility for our consent and decisions, knowing that they who do not show mercy can claim none.

The merciful must be merciful in their social actions and ideals—aggressively merciful. They must show mercy as citizens, deciding on war or peace; as stockholders, discussing the reduction of wages; as members of society, facing customs

and prejudices that condemn men and women of other castes and races to poor wages and low pay, that close in front of them the doors of health, education, and fellowship. The merciful should say with Whittier:<sup>1</sup>

“Yet here at least an earnest sense  
Of human right and weal is shown;  
A hate of tyranny intense  
And hearty in its vehemence,  
As if my brother’s pain and sorrow were my own.”

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<sup>1</sup>“Proem.”

THE HUNGRY FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

## THE HUNGRY FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after  
righteousness,  
For they shall be filled.

AS SENSITIVENESS to pain is a gauge of fulness of life, so hunger is a sign of health and growth. Last summer a family of blue jays made their nest outside our window. The young birds, just after hatching, seemed all insatiable mouths. Their hunger kept the parents busy all the time and within a few days they fed the young birds their weight in worms. Hunger imposes heavy burdens on living creatures. We have our hours in which we are tempted to think it would be blessed if our appetites would stay appeased awhile and let us attend to other matters.

At the end of my first year in the graduate school, our little boy lost his appetite when June came. Living was expensive in the big city, income small, and savings vanishing. Yet we did not congratulate ourselves on being able to save a grocery bill, when his appetite failed. Nor did we feel like congratulating him that he did not suffer the pangs of hunger any more. We knew that the boy had ceased to grow and was ill. We hurried

him out to the country and were glad when he began to come to the kitchen ravenously hungry five times a day!

Hunger is one of the great spurs to progress. It roused primitive man from the comfortable after-dinner nap and drove him out in search of food. It taught him that, if he were to have his appetite satisfied, he must store food, provide for its regular supply, plant in spring in order to reap in summer, organize to guard his fields and hunting grounds and stores from beasts and predatory tribes, or migrate in protected bands from fishing ground to fishing ground, from oasis to oasis, or from pasture ground to pasture ground.

Hunger is often regarded as a curse, but that is only when the food supply fails, when drought, locusts, wild beasts, robbers, flood, or war bring famine. In spiritual things, however, there is no such scarcity. Those who hunger for righteousness shall be filled. There hunger is blessed, for it provides the spur to spiritual progress without the scourge of famine. The word which is translated "shall be filled" in this beatitude is the regular expression for good grazing. It means literally that they shall pasture their fill. It reminds one of the first part of the Twenty-third Psalm, with its assurance that Jehovah will care for his people as the shepherd leads his flock in green pastures and beside the clear waters. No spiritual growth can outrun the spiritual supply. No aspiration



for goodness can outrun God's provision for the needs of his creatures. The Bread of Life in Christ is inexhaustible. "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." "What no eye has ever seen, what no ear has ever heard, what never entered into the mind of man, God has prepared for those that love him" (I Cor. 2:9, Moffatt's trans.). [We need not feel that our highest aspirations, longings, and ideals are hopeless and impracticable. The Golden Rule and Sermon on the Mount are not "an iridescent dream" of brotherhood and love. We need not fear to make a venture into untried realms of higher righteousness and try for a Christian social order for fear such things have no roots in the enduring realities of the world. The desire for evil is continually thwarted. But the aspiration for righteousness is fed from the eternal springs of God.]

If, therefore, we find ourselves with doubts and a divine discontent, let us rejoice, for we are in the way of blessing. If there come times when our religious experience seems elementary, our lives self-centred, our religious motives selfish, our worship perfunctory and our sympathies atrophied in the presence of the world's vast need—its sin and woe—let us thank God that we are still growing and the gates of larger life are opening before us. Doubt will drive us to the demonstration of the truth of our faith or the discovery of a truer one, if our doubts are genuine and not merely a "de-

fense mechanism" for sloth or sin. Browning rejoices in such hunger for the larger truth, the surer faith:

"Rather I prize the doubt,  
Low kinds exist without,  
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark."

If our field of service seems too small and our character petty, it may stir us to set out afresh for saintship or to lift up our eyes on the whitened fields and lead us to offer ourselves as labourers to the Lord of the harvest. The tragedy of the Pharisees was that they were so content with their own righteousness that Jesus could not get them to desire the higher righteousness which he offered them. Until he could arouse in them a hunger for something finer than their conventional righteousness he could not get them inside the kingdom. As Professor Peabody puts it, "To Jesus the one thing hopeless was ossification of heart."<sup>1</sup>

"Poor vaunt of life indeed  
Were man but formed to feed  
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:  
Such feasting ended then  
As sure an end to men:  
Irks care the crop-filled bird?  
Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Jesus Christ and the Social Problem*, Peabody.

<sup>2</sup>*Rabbi ben Ezra*, Browning.

There are two sources especially from which the divine discontent, the hunger for better things, should be expected. One is a knowledge of the world's need. A certain brand of cigarette has been widely advertised with the slogan "They satisfy." It might mean only that it is a satisfactory brand of cigarettes for discriminating smokers. But the accompanying picture suggests something else. It shows a young man well fed, well groomed, with a cultured face on which is an expression of supreme contentment with everything, a narcotic Nirvana. It provokes a Christian to the indignant query: In the face of the world's need, its suffering, ignorance, and sin, what right has any man to be satisfied? The danger of demonstrative self-righteousness is not threatening this generation. It is not fashionable for the educated and well-to-do to make long prayers or wear pious faces. But there is the danger of letting what soul God gave us at the start atrophy with dry rot, while we live as sleek, well-fed animals, deadening our brains and hearts against the needs of the world or the calls of the higher righteousness with the noise of jazz and with narcotic fumes. One may miss the kingdom of God and lose his soul just as surely and respectably either way. 7

2 The other source of spiritual discontent is in a closer acquaintance with Christ. As long as we associate only with equals or inferiors we may remain content with ourselves. But in the presence

of unqualified holiness and love, one must be dull indeed not to feel the urge to higher life. The vision of the Holy One led Isaiah to realize the sinfulness of his own lips and of his people. It led him to long for cleansing and then to volunteer for service (Isa. 6:5-8). At a new revelation of Jesus, Peter cried out "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Then he forsook all to follow Jesus (Luke 5:5-11). Jesus' call to us to be perfect in the wideness of our love, even as God is perfect in the universality of his providence and mercy, cannot leave any of us, if we hear and understand it, smugly content with our clannish loyalties, with a love limited by national lines or circumscribed by race prejudices.

Perhaps the greatest example in the New Testament of the type which Jesus has in mind is the Apostle Paul, as he discloses to us his inmost spirit in the third chapter of Philippians. He had attained the pinnacle of Pharisaism in its better sense in young manhood. "As touching the righteousness which is found in the law," he could say without boasting, "found blameless." But when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he counted all this but refuse in his eagerness to gain Christ and to "know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings," if by any means he might "attain unto the resurrection from the dead." In his years of apostleship he surpassed the original twelve in his labours, in his



sufferings, and in the fields of his service. A lesser spirit would have been content to retire with these laurels. But Paul writes from the Roman prison, "Not that I have already obtained or am <sup>ing to a</sup> already made perfect"; "but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

"We thank Thee, Lord, each day we live  
That thou hast spread such homely fare;  
Courage and patience Thou dost give,  
Bread of the spirit for our care.

"We thank Thee for Thy shelves low-spread,  
That even small, new souls like mine  
May reach on tiptoe and be fed,  
And every hungry heart may dine."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Edith Lombard Squires. Quoted by permission from the *Christian Century*, October 22, 1928.



THE PURE IN HEART

## THE PURE IN HEART

Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they shall see God.

ALL Jesus' hearers must have felt the contrast between this ideal of Jesus and the ideals of the Pharisees. Their emphasis was upon *external* purity, upon "washings of cups and pots and brazen vessels," upon fastings and tithings and other outward rites and ceremonies. Jesus characterized them as "whited sepulchres which outwardly appear beautiful but inwardly are full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness." Outwardly, he said, they appeared righteous unto men but were inwardly full of hypocrisy and iniquity. It is not necessary to suppose that all the Pharisees were of this type. But the Pharisaic system tended to put the stress on outward things and to make men forget the need of inward purity. In such a case the leaders would naturally be those who excelled in those things which were the natural fruit of the Pharisaic conception of righteousness.

Jesus' ideal of righteousness, on the contrary, is that of inward purity. He never attempted to define righteousness in terms of rules or essential

outward acts. He enjoined and tried to arouse the motives of reverence and of love, and left it to men's spiritual judgment to work out the application of them in daily life. The pure in heart are those who love the highest; who reverence God as sons; who nourish within themselves the kind of life that bears the fruits of love and meekness and unselfish service.

In the preaching under which I sat as a boy it was common to pour scorn on mere morality as a supposed substitute for religion. Now Jesus did not think highly of a legalistic morality which was the result of external compulsion or of the striving of the human will to render barren the roots of evil in human nature. His way of securing purity of life was to make the tree good so that good fruit would come spontaneously. But on the other hand Jesus did not share any antinomian contempt for morality. He knew that grossness of spirit is incompatible with acute sensitiveness to the things that are holy. He knew that sensuality and vulgarity cloud the windows of the spirit; that it is only the pure in heart who see God. He realized that it is possible for one to dull the sense of the things that are high and holy and to grow accustomed to the things that are base and evil, so that the appreciation of spiritual realities is lost. He knew that it was possible to cast that which is holy unto the dogs and pearls before the swine.

This beatitude is particularly timely because our

generation has witnessed a revolt against morality. Part of this is the perpetual struggle of youth for freedom and progress. No customs will be accepted by them without careful scrutiny and criticism. The moral laws meet the same challenge. We older folk tend continually to confound mere conventions with the nature of things and to put matters of custom into the same class with the laws of nature. We have all heard preachers who would put short skirts and bobbed hair in the same class with envy and hate, as breaches of the moral law. Our church disciplines sometimes have proscribed mere matters of moral opinion, like dancing and card-playing, as emphatically as dishonesty in business or corruption in politics. This disposition of youth to question the rules of society which they inherit and to revolt against those which seem no longer vital is the hope of the world's progress. But there are two things which are important for those who venture into the ways of moral experiment. It is important that they do not break with the moral ideals of the older society for selfish ends. If they are animated by a passion for truth, for liberty and righteousness, then they may rightly become the heroes and pioneers of a new and higher righteousness. But they must expect to pay patiently and without bitterness the penalty which the world will exact of them for their nonconformity. And in the second place they should first of all profit as

fully as possible by the experience of the past, as it is interpreted to them through history and literature. We do not begin serious research or experiments in other realms of life in the hope of discovering new elements or forces that may be useful to humanity without first mastering what has been gained and learned by the researches and experience of humanity in the past. It is possible, therefore, by noting the consequences of types of character and of conduct in the great figures of history and literature, to learn with less risk of fatal experience the great enduring principles of human conduct. Experience is a sure teacher but also an expensive one, and often young people make deadly mistakes in their experiments, from the consequences of which they never recover. They might have been saved these mistakes if they had profited by that experience of others which we may share by proxy through the lessons of literature.

Part of the revolt of this generation against morality is an aftermath of the World War and here again the blame must rest upon the older generation. It was not youth that wrecked civilization in 1914 nor made the impossible peace of Versailles. The young men were drafted as the instruments of the foolish and wicked statecraft and economic greed of an older generation. And if the youth of the present generation are tempted to discard fundamental laws of morality, like the commandments against lying, stealing, and adul-



tery, along with outgrown Victorian fashions and Puritan customs, we older people have probably only ourselves to blame that they do not distinguish between that which is temporal and that which is eternal. The war was carried on by the sanctification of immorality. It began and ended with secret and broken treaties. It was initiated by lying diplomacy, and the support of the people was secured by propaganda and deliberate deception. The morale of the soldiers was kept up by supplies of narcotics and the sacrifice of womanhood. Victory was accomplished by the killing of the best of the young manhood of the Occident, and the treaties which ended the struggle were disgraced by wholesale robbery of the defeated nations under the guise of mandates and reparations. If nations believe that lust and lying, killing and robbery serve the ends of life better than purity, truth, honesty, and peace, can we wonder if the younger generation believe that on occasion they may also serve their personal ends?

The moral laws represent in part the conventions of life which make possible the coöperation of civilization and under which there is safety and liberty. Such rules are conventions of civilization not to be confounded with the inherent laws of human nature and society. They are the rules of the game of civilized life, not to be broken except in exceptional circumstances for some higher good of life; but which may be changed or

abrogated by common consent when they no longer serve their purpose or when better rules can be devised. Such are the rules of the road, the sanitary code and similar arrangements for protecting life, health, and personal liberties. William Allen White gives one of his characters this ideal of the significance of the rules of the social order:

“But as the years passed, this truth came to be a part of his consciousness—that in some measure the thing we call custom, or law, or civilization, or society, with all its faults, is the best that man, endowed as he is to-day, can establish, and that the highest service one can pay to man or to God is found in conforming to the social compact, at whatever cost of physical pain, or mental anguish, if the conformation does not require a moral breach. That was the faith he lived by, that by service to his fellows and by sacrifice to whatever was worthy in the social compact, he would find a growth of soul that would pay him, either here or hereafter.”<sup>1</sup>

The moral laws are more deeply rooted, growing out of the essential nature of human society. Wherever human beings live and work together their conduct must be based upon these fundamental laws. The decalogues of the various religions and the moral codes of the great civilizations represent the long experience of humanity with these essential laws of common conduct. They are

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<sup>1</sup>*A Certain Rich Man*, p. 263.

not invented by men but discovered by men. The application of them to the details of conduct may change with changing situations, but the laws themselves are as unalterable as the law of gravitation or the laws of electricity. Life is possible only in accordance with them. The attempt to treat them as arbitrary and to ignore them must inevitably lead to disaster or to death. One spring I received a consignment of shrubs from the nursery. The accompanying directions seemed rather fussy and minute and I was tempted to set out the shrubs in my own way, ignoring the instructions. And then I remembered that the way that leads to life is narrow and that it would be better to observe the rules based on the nurseryman's long experience in keeping plants alive. Wherever I did this, the plants lived and flourished. Two years ago, planning to return eastward from southern California, I was vexed to discover that the maps indicated no road through the Sierras for five hundred miles between San Bernardino and Lake Tahoe. It seemed to me absurd, since I did not wish to return the way I had come through San Bernardino, to have to go five hundred miles northward out of my way. But I learned that the map makers were not simply trying to put me to needless trouble; that the attempt to cross the Sierras elsewhere would be difficult and dangerous and in most places impossible. It was better to obey the instructions of the automobile club, if I

wished to make the journey safely and rapidly, for they were based on geographical realities.

At periods throughout the history of civilization there have been classes and individuals and occasionally a whole generation who imagined that the moral laws were artificial attempts to limit their liberty or to keep them out of some desirable areas of the larger life. The end has always been the same. The family cannot be built upon unbridled lust or free love. The social group that tries it commits race suicide and the human family is perpetuated from those who keep the commandments. In a society where life and property are at the mercy of the strongest, the most cunning, and the most unscrupulous, there cannot be sufficient mutual trust to establish an orderly society nor a sufficient accumulation of property to give leisure for the development of the intellectual, the artistic, or the spiritual life. Even in a band of robbers there must be honesty and security of life. Modern business is built upon confidence and could not exist unless men's pledged word was trustworthy and their representations reliable.

The promise of this beatitude is that the pure in heart shall see God. The idea is a reflection of the Jewish conception of the Court of Heaven. The Pharisees believed that God had his court above the seventh heaven where he sat upon his throne like an oriental monarch in the hall of judgment. They believed that the great angels and the



guardian angels of the great men of earth—kings, princes, nobles, and the rich—were admitted to the inner court where they could see God's face (cf. Matt. 18:10). These were the angels of the presence. The promise that the pure in heart shall see God is a promise that the pure in heart shall be ranked highest among the people of God, among those who are regarded as worthy to come within God's court and behold his face.

While Jesus did not regard morality in its essential nature as all of religion, he did regard morality as a foundation of spiritual character. One may not erect a Gothic cathedral on a quagmire or establish a temple of God on a dunghill. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus asking the way of eternal life, Jesus began first to inquire as to the moral foundations of his character; and when the young man could say sincerely that he had kept the commandments from his youth, Jesus realized that he had indeed the promise of the heights of Christian character and told him he was not far from the kingdom of God.

The great mystics, who have had the richest experience in spiritual communion, who have explored the rare air beyond the lower mists in which the lives of most are spent, have always prized the beatific vision as the climax of the soul's striving after God. But the beatific vision comes only to those whose religious experience begins with keeping the commandments; for these commandments



are the road signs that indicate to eager souls the way that leads upward and Godward. One summer I spent a few days at Blue Ridge and was told by older residents about the magnificent view which could be seen from High Top. One warm summer afternoon I set out to climb to the great jutting lookout at the end of the ridge above the valley. As the trail wound upward along the mountain side and through the trees I found trails diverging from time to time. At each parting of the ways the trail was marked by signs indicating the way to the traveller. There was a path which ran along the mountain side to the cool spring. The way did not appear to be so strenuous nor so hot and there was refreshment at the end. But the arrow pointed the other way and the sign read "To High Top." I obeyed the commandment and kept on the steep trail. At the crest of the ridge there was a path to the right along the level summit. It looked alluring, as it led away among the evergreens to where the laurels and the rhododendrons were in bloom. But the sign "To High Top" pointed out the left-hand trail to the steep summit; and so at last I attained to High Top and the beatific vision. The checkered valley stretched out thousands of feet below, a vast panorama bounded by the purple and green mountains beyond. And I also realized why they who would enter into life must keep the commandments and only those who are morally disciplined and pure in heart find the vision of God.

## THE PEACEMAKERS

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Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called sons of God.

IT IS a sad evidence of the paganism in our Christian institutions that the term "pacifist" has come to be a reproach; for "peacemaker" in Latinized English is just "pacifist." We are a long way from the thought of Jesus when we bless the warrior and condemn the pacifist. "Peacemaker" does not quite express the thought of the original. Peace is usually considered a negative state—the absence of war or contention—and we are apt to think that the peacemaker is merely one who refuses to fight or at best simply makes wars to cease. But the Hebrew term "shalom" has a deeper positive meaning. It means harmony and order, making for the general welfare and expressing the healthful coöperation and unity of human society.

In almost every community, church, factory, or school, we find people of diverse tendencies: some trouble makers and others peacemakers. There are some people who inevitably stir up strife and sow the seeds of disruption in any place where they have influence. On the other hand there are those

who radiate good will and who become the germs of wholesome life and growth. These peacemakers are not necessarily leaders. They may be merely inconspicuous individuals who furnish the spirit of good will and coöperation. Sometimes they have the gift of reconciliation, the knack of restoring an atmosphere of good will and good humour, or they are the people who hold tenaciously and devotedly to high ideals and hold them so winningly before men's eyes that they forget petty differences in the desire to work together for the greater ends.

In chemistry there are certain elements which will combine only when a third element is present which, however, does not enter into the combination itself. These assisting elements are called catalyzers. The peacemakers often serve the purpose of human catalyzers. They are not actively, perhaps not even organically, concerned in the social processes but their presence and spirit constitute an influence which makes a peaceable society possible.

I am not forgetting that on one occasion Jesus said that he came "not to send peace but a sword" (Matt. 10:34-38). He was thinking of the inevitable opposition which evil makes to constructive good and of the division (Luke 12:51) which a new movement or a magnetic leader is apt to produce, at least temporarily, even in the most intimate social relations.

But Jesus did come to send peace. It is by means of a peacemaking spirit and the constructive social forces of the kingdom of God that the opposition of evil is to be removed and the divisions between men are to be reconciled. It was this kind of peacemaking which Jesus practised and blessed. The peacemakers, judged by their spiritual likeness to him, are to be called sons of God.

We have already noted the contrast between Jesus' ideal and that of the militaristic Romans. He did not bless the warriors. It is impossible to build by means of a sword. When he bade Peter put up his sword, he added, "Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53.) Think what wrongs Jesus could have righted at the head of the angelic legions! He could have released his people from the heavy taxes and the oppressions of Rome. His parables show that he knew of imprisonment for debt. He had seen wives and children of unfortunate workers seized and sold into slavery and prostitution. He knew of the thousands in Galilee who went to bed hungry every night. He knew of the vices and riotous living in the far-away capitals of Phœnicia and Greece and Rome. With an invincible army he could have abolished these evils. He could have realized the fairest dreams of ancient prophet and modern reformer. He could have freed the slaves, made childhood sacred, given women their rights.

He could have secured a more equitable distribution of the rewards of labour, provided relief for the sick and unfortunate, stopped the infamies of the Corinthian Venus worship, and "cleaned up" Rome. But Jesus did not beseech the Father for the angelic legions, because he knew the method was wrong. It would have added other miseries in place of those he sought to relieve. It would have substituted a new oppression in place of that of Rome. Jesus could have chained a world of slaves to the foot of his throne by military force, but he could not have made them hate the iniquities he abolished, nor delight in the righteousness he commanded, nor love their neighbours nor delight to do his will. Physical force is inadequate in the realm of the spirit. After its successful use, humanity's "head is bloody but unbowed."

The work of armies not only cannot build the kingdom of God, but it breaks down the slowly constructed habits, laws, and spirit of civilization. It is not only the accumulated material wealth and the art treasures of nations that war destroys. The spiritual gains of the centuries perish quickly in the flames of warlike passion. Kindness, tolerance, chivalry, good faith, and human brotherhood vanish. Lust, treachery, cruelty, and hate are unleashed. Little wonder Jesus regarded the suggestion that he use such means as a temptation to worship the devil as the price of power! Such results only come from the Evil One!



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guardian angels of the great men of earth—kings, princes, nobles, and the rich—were admitted to the inner court where they could see God's face (cf. Matt. 18:10). These were the angels of the presence. The promise that the pure in heart shall see God is a promise that the pure in heart shall be ranked highest among the people of God, among those who are regarded as worthy to come within God's court and behold his face.

While Jesus did not regard morality in its essential nature as all of religion, he did regard morality as a foundation of spiritual character. One may not erect a Gothic cathedral on a quagmire or establish a temple of God on a dunghill. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus asking the way of eternal life, Jesus began first to inquire as to the moral foundations of his character; and when the young man could say sincerely that he had kept the commandments from his youth, Jesus realized that he had indeed the promise of the heights of Christian character and told him he was not far from the kingdom of God.

The great mystics, who have had the richest experience in spiritual communion, who have explored the rare air beyond the lower mists in which the lives of most are spent, have always prized the beatific vision as the climax of the soul's striving after God. But the beatific vision comes only to those whose religious experience begins with keeping the commandments; for these commandments



are the road signs that indicate to eager souls the way that leads upward and Godward. One summer I spent a few days at Blue Ridge and was told by older residents about the magnificent view which could be seen from High Top. One warm summer afternoon I set out to climb to the great jutting lookout at the end of the ridge above the valley. As the trail wound upward along the mountain side and through the trees I found trails diverging from time to time. At each parting of the ways the trail was marked by signs indicating the way to the traveller. There was a path which ran along the mountain side to the cool spring. The way did not appear to be so strenuous nor so hot and there was refreshment at the end. But the arrow pointed the other way and the sign read "To High Top." I obeyed the commandment and kept on the steep trail. At the crest of the ridge there was a path to the right along the level summit. It looked alluring, as it led away among the evergreens to where the laurels and the rhododendrons were in bloom. But the sign "To High Top" pointed out the left-hand trail to the steep summit; and so at last I attained to High Top and the beatific vision. The checkered valley stretched out thousands of feet below, a vast panorama bounded by the purple and green mountains beyond. And I also realized why they who would enter into life must keep the commandments and only those who are morally disciplined and pure in heart find the vision of God.



## THE PEACEMAKERS

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Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called sons of God.

It is a sad evidence of the paganism in our Christian institutions that the term "pacifist" has come to be a reproach; for "peacemaker" in Latinized English is just "pacifist." We are a long way from the thought of Jesus when we bless the warrior and condemn the pacifist. "Peacemaker" does not quite express the thought of the original. Peace is usually considered a negative state—the absence of war or contention—and we are apt to think that the peacemaker is merely one who refuses to fight or at best simply makes wars to cease. But the Hebrew term "shalom" has a deeper positive meaning. It means harmony and order, making for the general welfare and expressing the healthful coöperation and unity of human society.

In almost every community, church, factory, or school, we find people of diverse tendencies: some trouble makers and others peacemakers. There are some people who inevitably stir up strife and sow the seeds of disruption in any place where they have influence. On the other hand there are those

who radiate good will and who become the germs of wholesome life and growth. These peacemakers are not necessarily leaders. They may be merely inconspicuous individuals who furnish the spirit of good will and coöperation. Sometimes they have the gift of reconciliation, the knack of restoring an atmosphere of good will and good humour, or they are the people who hold tenaciously and devotedly to high ideals and hold them so winningly before men's eyes that they forget petty differences in the desire to work together for the greater ends.

In chemistry there are certain elements which will combine only when a third element is present which, however, does not enter into the combination itself. These assisting elements are called catalyzers. The peacemakers often serve the purpose of human catalyzers. They are not actively, perhaps not even organically, concerned in the social processes but their presence and spirit constitute an influence which makes a peaceable society possible.

I am not forgetting that on one occasion Jesus said that he came "not to send peace but a sword" (Matt. 10:34-38). He was thinking of the inevitable opposition which evil makes to constructive good and of the division (Luke 12:51) which a new movement or a magnetic leader is apt to produce, at least temporarily, even in the most intimate social relations.

But Jesus did come to send peace. It is by means of a peacemaking spirit and the constructive social forces of the kingdom of God that the opposition of evil is to be removed and the divisions between men are to be reconciled. It was this kind of peacemaking which Jesus practised and blessed. The peacemakers, judged by their spiritual likeness to him, are to be called sons of God.

We have already noted the contrast between Jesus' ideal and that of the militaristic Romans. He did not bless the warriors. It is impossible to build by means of a sword. When he bade Peter put up his sword, he added, "Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53.) Think what wrongs Jesus could have righted at the head of the angelic legions! He could have released his people from the heavy taxes and the oppressions of Rome. His parables show that he knew of imprisonment for debt. He had seen wives and children of unfortunate workers seized and sold into slavery and prostitution. He knew of the thousands in Galilee who went to bed hungry every night. He knew of the vices and riotous living in the far-away capitals of Phœnicia and Greece and Rome. With an invincible army he could have abolished these evils. He could have realized the fairest dreams of ancient prophet and modern reformer. He could have freed the slaves, made childhood sacred, given women their rights.

He could have secured a more equitable distribution of the rewards of labour, provided relief for the sick and unfortunate, stopped the infamies of the Corinthian Venus worship, and "cleaned up" Rome. But Jesus did not beseech the Father for the angelic legions, because he knew the method was wrong. It would have added other miseries in place of those he sought to relieve. It would have substituted a new oppression in place of that of Rome. Jesus could have chained a world of slaves to the foot of his throne by military force, but he could not have made them hate the iniquities he abolished, nor delight in the righteousness he commanded, nor love their neighbours nor delight to do his will. Physical force is inadequate in the realm of the spirit. After its successful use, humanity's "head is bloody but unbowed."

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In the war between the states military power could prevent the secession of the Southern states, but the actual reconstruction of the national loyalty and feeling had to wait for the agencies of peace and was accomplished by the kind of spiritual influences that with equal patience and sacrifice could have preserved the unity of the country without war. War gave a legal freedom to the slaves, but it gave them neither the economic independence, nor the suffrage, nor the self-control which are the essence of liberty. The real enfranchisement of the Negroes has now to be accomplished by the teacher and missionary, and it is taking longer to do it than if the war had not wasted the resources and heightened the prejudices of the very people who must do most of the work of enfranchisement.

It is only when the soldier sheathes his sword and is followed by the organizer, judge, teacher, or missionary that the real work of justice or culture or social reconstruction is ever done. If it be asserted that it is necessary for the soldier to use the sword in order that the teacher and organizer may have opportunity, it is enough to note that Jesus did not think so. It was by the cross that he sought the opportunity for his truth.

It is a wrong reading of history which attributes great advances in civilization to wars as such. Often wars break up a fixed order of society and so give new tendencies a chance to develop. The fierce

passions of war sometimes destroy institutions that are obstacles to progress, as fire may burn off the old prairie grass and give the new growth a chance. Wars often shift populations so as to bring the stimulus of new ideas or new customs to bear upon stagnant peoples, just as they often bring new diseases like the "flu" upon peoples who have no immunity! Ludwig in his *Life of Napoleon* makes clear that in his early career Napoleon knew the futility of mere force. He knew that by mere force of arms he could not contend successfully with a spiritual force like the Papacy. After his battles he made haste to capitalize the spiritual impression by negotiations for a favourable peace. As we read history we see that after every great war the world has had to wait until the passions of war subsided—the fears and hates, the sense of injustice, and the thirst for vengeance—before constructive work was possible.

But it is the peacemaker, not the warrior, who does the work of reconciling and rebuilding the world. Such constructive statesmen are only indirectly aided by wars and could get a better hearing if only the world would sit down at the council table in the reasonable mood of peace to solve the world's problems instead of waiting until after a war to attempt it. And every creative leader who has attempted the task of reconstruction after a war, knows that the hate and fear, distrust and desire for revenge engendered by war stand in the

way of his work. It is customary to say that, had Lincoln lived, the problem of reconciliation between North and South and of the reconstruction of the national life would have been worked out differently. Personally I doubt whether even Lincoln's popularity could have withstood the passions, especially the intense sectional hate, of the Northern people, which were the necessary psychological condition of carrying the war to a victorious conclusion. Thaddeus Stevens still would have been the mouthpiece of victorious hate and desire for punishment, and even Lincoln could hardly have withstood him. We have seen the same result in the outcome of the late war. Clemenceau was too strong for President Wilson even at home, where a propaganda of hatred had aroused our country to a fighting passion just as the war ended. To overthrow Wilson's idealism and desire for conciliatory justice, it was only necessary for Clemenceau and Lloyd George to accuse him of being the champion of Germany and for Senator Lodge to accuse him of renouncing the independence of America.

There have been military empires that seemed to be an exception to the principles just affirmed. The Empire of Rome was established by conquest, but it was not the sword of the conqueror that really constructed it and gave it its enduring strength. Assyria had conquered as successfully as Rome, but her empire did not endure. The

peoples around the Mediterranean were demobilized by the Roman government, while the Roman legions guarded the far-flung frontiers. The mass of able-bodied men, released from the duties of camp and barracks, from the work of war and preparing for war, were able to turn their hands to the constructive tasks of peace. The result was a degree of well-being and even luxury which the masses had never known before. Rome brought peace, security, order, justice, freedom, and opportunity. It was by this work of peacemaking rather than by the warfare of the legions that the Roman Empire was built and maintained. The same is even more true of the British Empire. Before the outbreak of the late World War the German rulers thought that the British Empire was held together only by the power of the British navy. They expected that, when the British fleet was concentrated and held in the North Sea, each of the dominions would go its own way. But they were surprised to find that the British Empire was rooted in the loyalty of its citizens, who felt more secure and prosperous within the Empire than if each had to provide for its security and economic opportunity alone. The British Empire was built up even less by military conquest than was the Roman. Kipling sums up the constructive processes which, even in the mind of such an imperialist as himself, outweighed the destructive work of the army:

“We broke a king and opened a road,  
And a court house stands where the regiment  
goed.”

The peacemakers are all those through whose influence human life and organization are coordinated, reconciled, and maintained in a mutually beneficent organism. The peacemakers are statesmen and diplomats who seek ways of reconciliation between conflicting interests and desires, before as well as after war; teachers, ministers, writers, and publicists who build up progressive public opinion and the spiritual good will which are the basis of all peaceful coöperation; they are the constructive organizers of business, the leaders and organizers of labour, and all who promote the larger welfare of mankind. The last decade has seen two men whom, without claiming to be a prophet, I believe the long perspective of history will recognize as the two really great statesmen who have arisen in the after shadow of the war. Other men have had the idea of some kind of world federation or universal parliament that should be the instrument of reconciliation or peaceful coöperation between the nations. But with all his mistakes and shortcomings, to President Wilson must go the honour of putting it upon the working programme of the world and getting it actually established. For a period following the Armistice it seemed as though German public opinion would



follow the track which French opinion followed after the War of 1871. If the German people had set their hearts on revenge and had dedicated themselves to the task of national restoration with that in mind, the history of Europe the next half century would have been an exaggerated reproduction of the history of the preceding fifty years. Europe would have become again an armed camp with the shadow of another and more terrible war hanging over the spirits of men and wasting their substance in preparation for it. But when Foreign Minister Stresemann persuaded his own people to renounce the purpose of revenge and made overtures to France for a friendly understanding and coöperation, the shadow passed and Locarno became the starting point for a peaceful readjustment of world relations.

The blessing on the peacemakers is that they shall be called sons of God. It is the greatest promise of them all, after the promise of the kingdom of heaven in the first beatitude. The connection between the virtue and its reward is not accidental, as the conclusion of the fifth chapter of Matthew shows. Jesus there enjoins love of enemies instead of hatred and the forgiving spirit toward the oppressor *as the evidence that men are sons of their Father who is in heaven*. God is kind toward the evil and the unthankful. He makes the sun to rise on the evil and good alike and sends his rain on the just and the unjust. They who share

this all-inclusive love of God, who have the overcoming constructive spirit of benevolence and good will—these show the fruit of the divine Spirit in their own lives. The fruit of the Spirit is love, and they who are born of the Spirit exhibit a spiritual likeness of their Father; therefore peacemakers shall be called sons of God.

THE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS'  
SAKE

## THE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE

Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

THIS beatitude is the last of those which have a qualifying clause. In Luke's version a similar clause is added: "For the son of man's sake." It is only when one is persecuted for righteousness' sake, for the sake of the kind of righteousness which Jesus lived and taught, that one is blessed in it, having the promise of the kingdom of God. Otherwise it is evil that brings suffering and persecution from one's fellows. In a world made and governed by a righteous God, it is the rule that evildoers are made to suffer and there is no blessing on those who suffer or are persecuted for wickedness' sake.

This saying of Jesus carries us at once into the heart of a mystery which troubled the spirits and deep thinkers among the Jews; the mystery of the suffering of the righteous in the world. The general view was that when the righteous suffered, whether from a physical or a social cause, the suffering was *in spite* of their righteousness and *not because of it*. Here, however, Jesus goes beyond contemporary

thought, though not beyond the thought of Daniel or Second Isaiah, in suggesting that in certain cases the righteous suffer *not in spite of* their righteousness but *because of* it. This is because we live in an evil world; that is, in a human society that is not organized entirely on the principles of the kingdom of God—a world in which evil motives, passions, and ideals to a large extent are still dominant.

The sufferings of the righteous for righteousness' sake seem to be a necessary condition of spiritual progress. Jesus reminds us in the succeeding verses that it is the usual fate of prophets to go unhonoured, or even to be stoned, because of their progressive attitude (see also Matt. 23:29-37; Luke 4:24). But the world cannot get on without leaders who are actually or implicitly critics of their own generation. Progress requires not merely teachers of a new order but nonconformists and "conscientious objectors," who actually practise in one age the ideals of an age yet to come (see Rom. 12:2; Phil. 3:20). The pioneers of righteousness always have to endure the deep privations, the hardships, and the sufferings of other pioneers. The question why this should be necessary sits heavy on our hearts at times and we wonder why it should not be possible to make moral progress reasonably and gladly. Why should each generation compel the men with prophetic vision and public spirit to prove their sincerity by enduring



jeers, ostracism, and persecution? We have come in some measure to adopt an open-minded attitude toward mechanical inventions and to show tolerance and respect for those who are engaged in exploration and scientific research in things physical. We do not persecute the man who offers a cure for cancer or a process of television, unless he is proved a fraud. We are eager for the greater liberty and the greater instruments of power which these men may provide for us. We ask only that they demonstrate to us, who come to them with an open mind, the truth of their discoveries or the worth of their inventions. But when a prophet or an apostle comes, proposing a new order of human society, to give the unfortunate, the outcast, and the exploited a better chance of life; when reforms are proposed to provide better channels for the benevolence of men, to make it easier to be good and harder to do evil; to make room for larger liberty or quality or Christian brotherhood, the proposals usually meet with prejudiced minds, and, if the prophet or reformer attempts to practise his ideas, he is called "heretic," "traitor," or "Bolshevik," and is cast out as evil.

As practical alternatives to the age-old method of refusing to honour a prophet till he is long dead and of rejecting those who come with a call to higher righteousness, there seem to be two possibilities. We can conceive of a community or state agreeing to listen to proposed reforms and changes,

but waiting to do anything until everybody is convinced and the group can go forward together. Some have thought that universal peace, for example, could come only if some nation would dare to take the rôle of pioneer of peace, set an example of complete disarmament, and perhaps also pay the martyr's price for its adherence to Christian principles. This was William Penn's attitude when he founded Pennsylvania, believing that "the nations need an example." But the principle of unanimous consent is the one that lies behind the treaties negotiated by Secretary Kellogg and ratified in the Pact of Paris. In this way there would be no ostracism and no persecution for all would go forward together by common agreement.

As the world goes, however, such a method of progress does not seem likely to be often practised. The stubborn determination of evil and the conservatism of the good are alike serious obstacles to such a method of progress. It could succeed only with openmindedness on the part of the people generally and the universal tolerance of free speech. Entrenched evils and conservative customs are not likely to give such an opportunity to innovators to turn away the hearts of men. They usually "kill the prophets and stone those who are sent unto them" for fear they may convince the world that change is right. The leaders of capitalistic Europe were apparently afraid to allow a fair trial of communism in Russia lest it

might succeed. When Lady Astor made her maiden speech in Parliament, it required great courage, both because she was breaking an ancient tradition as the first woman M. P., and because she was attacking the liquor traffic. She said, "Honourable members, however, should not be frightened of what Plymouth sends out into the world. After all, I suppose when Drake and Raleigh wanted to set out on their venturesome careers, some cautious persons said: 'Stay at home cruising in home waters.' I have no doubt that the same thing occurred when the Pilgrim Fathers set out. I have no doubt that there were cautious Christian brethren who did not understand their going out into the wide seas to worship God in their own way. But on the whole, the world is all the better for those venturesome and courageous West Country people."

Of the two, the conservatism of the good seems perhaps a more serious obstacle to progress in righteousness than the opposition of evil. Jesus warned his disciples of the danger of unheeding contentment on the part of those who "having tasted old wine" do not desire new (Luke 5:39) and of those tense times "when whoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God" (John 16:2). When we inquire who it was that slew Jesus, we discover with something of a shock that it was not the common sinners—thieves and publicans and harlots—who put him to death, but

the official guardians of law and religion. It was the privileged and the respectable leaders—Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, the priests, Pharisees, and the business men of Jerusalem—who put Jesus to death and persecuted his disciples for righteousness' sake.

A second alternative to persecution for righteousness' sake is for men to accept the world as it is now prescribed by custom and public opinion. It would require some suppression of conviction, some violence to conscience on the part of high souls, to "run with the multitude to do evil"; but it is a way that is especially alluring and dangerous in America to-day. We are tempted to be content with the gains for which our fathers paid a high price and to practise the traditional ideals of righteousness except in the negligible cases where changes can be brought about by unanimous consent. One of the greatest dangers in contemporary American life is the danger of "mobocracy." There is a subserviency to public opinion which disapproves and tends to suppress both individuality and private initiative in thought and in life. There is a tendency to reduce everything to standardized customs and a dead level of monotonous uniformity. This is most serious in its effect upon moral and spiritual character. It tends to drive men to ignore conscience, to be skeptical of individual spiritual guidance, and to destroy moral initiative and leadership in business, state, and church.



Such an attitude tends to produce in our American democracy a society like the Jerusalem of Jesus' day which "kills the prophets and stones them that are sent unto her."

We cannot, of course, be followers of Jesus and accept such an alternative to paying the penalty of persecution for righteousness. As long as such an attitude prevails on the part of the public, the preachers who deviate from accepted moral standards and conventional theology to try to make politics, morals, or business conform more closely to the righteousness of the kingdom of God must continue to meet the fate which Jesus blesses. Under present conditions a necessary element of progress must continue to be the pioneering prophet, the voice of the reformer crying in the wilderness, and the solitary seer rebuking the people. We cannot be followers of Jesus and subscribe to the doctrine that "the voice of the people is the voice of God," nor can we "render unto Cæsar the things that belong to God."

As we look back upon the attitudes and virtues upon which Jesus pronounces his blessing in these beatitudes, it is noteworthy how fully they provide for human progress. They give the attitude of mind and heart which is sensitive to existing human suffering and at the same time eager for greater good; which is constructive in its attitude toward human welfare and which furnishes the moral independence and leadership necessary to



lift society to higher levels. If we are to inherit the kingdom of God, we need not only to be pure in heart and hungering for righteousness, but we must also be peacemakers and willing to suffer for righteousness' sake. A Christian nation, no less than an individual Christian, must be willing to order its policies according to the principles of the kingdom and, if need be, suffer for righteousness' sake.

The kingdom of God belongs to those who will make the high adventure of righteousness; who like Abram go out in faith, seeking the city whose builder and maker is God; who believe in righteousness, peace, and love as workable realities in the life that now is; who like Paul are not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

“‘Dreamers of dreams!’ We take the taunt with  
gladness,  
Knowing that God beyond the years you see,  
Hath wrought the dreams, that count to you for  
madness,  
Into the substance of life to be.”

Those who dare this faith are blessed, for they shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God.

THE PASSIVE VIRTUES

## THE PASSIVE VIRTUES

IT BECOMES clear as we review the beatitudes that the virtues which constitute the righteousness of the kingdom are the so-called passive virtues. We have noted the absence of the Stoic virtues of the Roman. Jesus has no blessing for the conventional virtues, for prudence, courage, patience, temperance, and justice. This astonishes us even as it astonished his contemporaries. In the best sense, these are essential virtues of civilized man everywhere. Jesus could take them for granted as common ground between himself and his age. We must also remember that these terms have been much spiritualized in the centuries that intervene between his age and ours. The Church not only added the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love to the Stoic, as in Dante's *Purgatorio* and on the pavement of the parish church on Stratford-on-Avon, but it also inoculated the old pagan words with Christian ideas. If instead of prudence, courage, patience, and temperance we say foresight, bravery, endurance, and self-control, we see easily that these are at bottom the virtues of the prize fighter. He must be able to anticipate his opponent's moves; to take punishment and

not show a yellow streak; to train consistently and not lose his head in a fight. They are originally the virtues of a militaristic caste, not the characteristics of the kingdom of God.

The conventional moral ideals of Christendom are a curious intermingling of pagan and Christian. The virtues of the beatitudes have been looked upon with suspicion or scorn by generations of "baptized pagans"; they have been relegated to the church and cloister, and (in part) to the home; reserved for the use of monks and priests and women. They are regarded as counsels of perfection, to be practised in the millennium or between individual saints, but utterly impracticable or dangerous in business, politics, and international relations.

This depreciation of the ideals of the beatitudes has a second cause in the common misunderstanding of the nature of the so-called passive virtues. I say "so-called" because the word "passive" is a misnomer, and the common notion of their character is a mistaken notion. We may classify the "virtues"—manifestations of moral energy in men's attitudes toward the problems, difficulties, and evils of life—as active, passive, and neuter. Some of these terms are partly misleading, as we have said, but they are the ones in common use. The active is power to do; the passive, power to bear; while the neuter is the inability to exert any power. The world has too generally despised the

passive virtues because it has confused them with the neuter.

This confusion arises from a certain likeness in their apparent results. The boiler that carries no steam looks and acts like the one that sustains two hundred pounds' pressure. Neither explodes, but the reason is very different in each case; and there is a vast difference in the potential power of the two. The thick-skinned jade and the sensitive high-spirited horse may neither one run away under the lash, but the reason is very different in the two cases: one feels no sting and the other can control itself in spite of the sting.

"One who can bear insult does not revenge himself; one who cannot feel insult does not revenge himself. The effect is the same, but the cause is very different. In the one case the desisting from vengeance is the result of a force, and of a force often powerfully exerted. In the other case it springs from the absence of all force; it is the effect of pure inanity, and has wrought out an end in whose merit it has no share. If we turn to the Sermon on the Mount we shall find a striking evidence of this. The virtues there spoken of may be either feminine (passive) or neuter. There is a poverty of spirit that springs not from humility, but from the want of it; not from seeing something beyond, but from being bounded by one's own horizon. It is the self-contentment that aspires not, and it has no beatitude. There is a meekness that is the calm of glass, and not the calm of the sea; it exists only from the absence of inward storm.



There is a mercy which comes from sheer indifference, and is inferior to the spirit of anger. There is a purity of heart which is the result of pure innocence—which envies not, because it has not learned the value of things. There is a peace-making that is born of pusillanimity, and has no claim to be called the offspring of God. It is the easiest thing in the world to mistake any one of these virtues for its step-sister.”<sup>1</sup>

The dishonour which rightly attaches to the neuter character has, on account of this similarity and consequent confusion, come to rest on the passive. But the passive virtues, so far from being the absence of strength, are the highest manifestation of power which man is capable of exerting.

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty;  
And he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.

(Prov. 16:32.)

Unless a man be too mean-spirited to feel an insult, it takes more strength for him to turn the other cheek than to strike back. It takes more moral force for a father or teacher to win obedience by reason, patience, and love than to compel it by the use of the rod. It demands more strength of character, more manhood, in a nation to raise barbarous peoples to civilization and liberty by teaching and preaching the truth to them and by

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<sup>1</sup>“The Feminine Ideal of Christianity,” Mattheson, *Biblical World*, July and August, 1898.

setting them an example of humanity and righteousness, than it does to force them by means of war into external conformity to law and right. The resort to the birch or the army is a confession of moral laziness or of moral weakness on the part of teacher or nation. Physical courage is an honourable thing in contrast with physical cowardice; but physical force is a cheap and easy method which men still use, dignifying it with the names of valour and manhood, because they have not yet risen far enough above the brute, have not attained sufficient moral strength to wield the passive virtues. The use of the passive virtues has often failed of immediate effect, it is true; but the exercise of the active alone has rarely met with ultimate success. In a society where the quick appeal is to physical force, the passive virtues have as yet had no fair trial, and yet under these circumstances they have commended themselves by their fruits in the fields of family life, education, and penal reform. The "passive" method has often been tried by those who had not sufficient strength of character and was then as great a failure as the old method when tried by a teacher who had not sufficient muscle or by a nation with an inferior army.

Professor Matheson calls the three classes of virtues the masculine, feminine, and neuter. The terms are in some respects very apt; the active virtues are those upon which men as a class have relied most; the passive are most characteristic of

women. Men seek to bear down their opponents, to ride by force over obstacles; women tend to bear up their burdens; they stoop to conquer. Men have sought commonly to gain liberties, defend their rights, and protect their persons and property by personal or organized physical force; women as a rule have gained their rights and secured protection and immunities by patience and love. The feminine virtues are the most enduring and powerful in their effects, and have often conquered where the masculine have failed. It is a common spectacle to see a frail woman with the keener sensibilities bear up under trials which cause the man to give way—which drive him to drink or suicide to escape the burden he no longer has strength to bear. It is for those who hold that physical force is necessary for the preservation of property, person, and life to explain the continued existence and privileged position of women in the world; to explain the fact that at the present time they are gaining, as fast as they care to demand or exercise them, all those cherished political and social rights which, we are told, men can only obtain and hold by physical or military force.

It is the secret of strength, not a source of weakness in Christ's plan, that he confined his disciples to the passive virtues in their efforts to overcome the world and establish his kingdom. The active virtues have their place in the Christian scheme; but their proper use is in the conquest of

nature, not of man. It is by their exercise that the needs and luxuries of life are to be provided. By them men carry on the world's agriculture and industries, cast up its highways, develop its material resources, carry its commerce, build its homes, and beautify its cities. But the active virtues can neither win the heart of man nor convince his reason. Physical force may destroy the body but cannot conquer the soul. It may make martyrs, but not subjects of the kingdom of God. It may silence the reformer's lips but cannot silence his conscience's cry against his people's sin. Professor Moulton, in commenting on the prophecies in Isaiah 40-66, says:

"Closely associated with this is another of the great ideas of the rhapsody—that of spiritual conquest. . . . This is among the loftiest moral conceptions of all human thought. How new an idea it was is measured by the length of time it has taken even the leaders of thought to grasp it. In actual history, the men of the return were distinguished by a spirit of violent exclusiveness that sought to draw tighter the bonds of hereditary privilege; their literary production, 'The Chronicles,' delights to dwell on a religious reform like that of Asa, with its covenant, 'that whosoever should not seek the Lord, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.' (II Chron. 15: 12-14.) Fifteen centuries of Christianity exhibited Jews persecuting Christians and Christians persecuting Jews, Catholics Protestants, and Protestants Quakers,



before the idea began slowly to make its way that force cannot conquer spirit."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus avoided this mistake. He wants no slaves in his kingdom: its subjects must be so by free choice. He knew the conquering power of the passive virtues. He confined the work of his followers to them. In the beatitudes he predicted blessings and dominion for them, and his insight into their hitherto despised power gave him an enduring victory and dominion to which the military chieftains of earth have aspired in vain. "The fact that Jesus led no army, that he wrote no book, built no church, spent no money, but that he loved, and so conquered, this is beginning to strike men."<sup>3</sup>

Christian love is not the apotheosis of impotence nor is Christian peace the quiet of indifference or death. The forces it employs are mightier than the forces of war in accomplishing the ends of righteousness. It is a lesson that the world is slow to learn; still the world mistakes the passive virtues of the Christian for the neuter virtues of the dead. But the truth remains that "God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base

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<sup>2</sup>*Modern Readers' Bible*, Isaiah Volume, pp. 18-19.

<sup>3</sup>*The Ideal Life*, Henry Drummond, p. 63.



things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea, and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are" (I Cor. 1: 27, 28).

Blessed are the poor in spirit:  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

THE END